

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED

"HOUSEHOLD WORDS"

No. 9. NEW SERIES.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 30, 1869.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

WRECKED IN PORT.

A SERIAL STORY BY THE AUTHOR OF "BLACK SHEEP."

CHAPTER XI. THE LOOT.

MR. CRESWELL'S only son, who was named after Mr. Creswell's only brother, by no means resembled his prototype either in appearance, manners, or disposition. For whereas Tom Creswell the elder had been a long, lean, washed-out looking person, with long wiry black hair, sallow complexion, hollow cheeks, and a faint dawn of a moustache (in his youth he had turned down his collars and modelled himself generally on Lord Byron, and throughout his life he was declared by his wife to be most aristocratic and romantic looking), Tom Creswell the younger had a small, round, bullet head, with closely cropped sandy hair, eyes deeply sunken and but little visible, snub nose, wide mouth, and dimpled chin. Tom Creswell the elder rose at noon, and lay upon the sofa all day, composing verses, reading novels, or playing the flute. Tom Creswell the younger was up at five every morning, round through the stables, saw the horses properly fed, peered into every corn-bin ("Darned, now whey do thot? Darned if un doesn't count carn grains, I think," was the groom's muttered exclamation on this proceeding), ran his hand over the animals, and declared that they "didn't carry as much flesh as they might," with a look at the helpers, which obviously meant that they starved the cattle and sold the oats. Then Tom the younger would go to the garden, where his greatest delight lay in counting the peaches, and nectarines, and plums, and apricots, nestling coyly against the old red south wall; in taking stock of the cucumbers and melons,

under their frames; and in ticking off the number of the bunches of grapes slowly ripening in the sickly heat of the vinery, while the Scotch head gardener, a man whose natural hot-headedness was barely kept within bounds by the strictness of his religious opinions, would stand by looking on, outwardly placid, but inwardly burning to deliver himself of his sentiments in the Gaelic language. Tom Creswell the elder was always languid and ailing; as a boy he had worn a comforter, and a hareskin on his chest; had taken cough-lozenges and jujubes; had been laughed at and called "Molly" and "Miss" by his school-fellows, and had sighed and simpered away his existence. Tom Creswell the younger was strong as a Shetland pony, and hard as a tennis ball, full of exuberant vitality which, not finding sufficient vent in ordinary schoolboy fun, in cricket, or hockey, or football, let itself off in cruelty, in teasing and stoning animals, in bullying smaller boys. Tom Creswell the elder was weak, selfish, idle, and conceited, but you could not help allowing it—he was a gentleman. Tom Creswell the younger—you could not possibly deny it—was a blatant cad.

Not the least doubt of it. Everybody knew it, and most people owned it. Down in the village it was common talk. Mr. Creswell was wonderfully respected in Helmingham town, though the old people minded the day when he was thought little of. Helmingham is strictly conservative, and when Mr. Creswell first settled himself at Woolgreaves, and commenced his restoration of the house, and was known to be spending large sums on the estate, and was seen to have horses and equipages, very far outshining those of Sir Thomas Churchill of the Park, who was lord of the

manor, and a county magnate of the very first order, the village folk could not understand a man of no particular birth or breeding, and whose money, it was well known, had been made in trade—which, to the Helmingham limited comprehension, meant across a counter in a shop, “just like Tom Boucher, the draper”—attaining such a position. They did not like the idea of being patronised by one whom they considered to be of their own order, and the foolish face which had been transmitted through ten generations, and the stupid head which had never had a wise idea or a kindly thought in it, received the homage which was denied to the clever man who had been the founder of his own fortune, and who was the best landlord and the kindest neighbour in the country round. But this prejudice soon wore away. The practical good sense which had gained for Mr. Creswell his position soon made itself felt among the Helmingham folk, and the “canny” ones soon grew as loud in his praise as they had been in his disparagement. Even Jack Forman, the ne’er-do-weel of the village, who was always sunning his fat form at alehouse doors, and who had but few good words for any one, save for the most recent “stander” of beer, had been heard to declare outside that Mr. Creswell was the “raight soort,” a phrase which, in Jack’s limited vocabulary, stood for something highly complimentary. The young ladies, too, were exceedingly popular. They were pretty, of a downright English prettiness, expressed in hair and eyes and complexion, a prettiness commending itself at once to the uneducated English rustic taste, which is apt to find classical features “peaky,” and romantic expression “fal-lal.” They were girls about whom there was “no nonsense” — cheerful, bright, and homely. The feelings which congealed into cold politeness under the influence of Marian Ashurst’s supposed “superiority” overflowed with womanly tenderness when their possessor was watching Widow Halton through the fever, or tending little Madge Mason’s crippled limb. The bright faces of “the young ladies” were known for miles through the country round, and whenever sickness or distress crossed the threshold they were speedily followed by these ministering angels. If human prayers for others’ welfare avail on high, Mr. Creswell and his nieces had them in scores.

But the Helmingham folk did not pray much for young Tom; on the contrary, their aspirations towards him were, it is to

be feared, of a malignant kind. The warfare which always existed between the village folk and the Grammar School boys was carried on without rancour. The farmers whose orchards were robbed, whose growing wheat was trampled down, whose ducks were dog-hunted, contented themselves with putting in an occasional appearance with a cart-whip, fully knowing, at the same time, the impossibility of catching their young and active tormentors, and with “darn’-ing” the rising generation in general, and the youth then profiting by Sir Ranulph Clinton’s generosity in particular. The village tradesmen whose windows were broken, when they discovered who were the offenders, laid on an additional item to their parents’ account; when they could not bring the crime home to any boy in particular, laid on an additional item to Mr. Ashurst’s account, and thus consoled themselves. Moreover there was a general feeling that somehow, in a way that they could not and never attempted to explain, the school, since Mr. Ashurst had had it in hand, had been a credit to the place, and the canny folk, in their canniness, liked something which brought them credit and cost them nothing, and had friendly feelings to the masters and the boys. But not to young Tom Creswell. They hated him, and they said so roundly. What was youthful merriment and mischief in other boys was, they averred, “bedevilment” in young Tom. Standing at their doors on fine summer evenings, the village folk would pause in their gossip to look after him as he cantered by on his chesnut pony—an animal which Banks, the farrier, declared to be as vicious and as cross-grained as its master. Eyes were averted as he passed, and no hat was raised in salutation; but that mattered little to the rider. He noticed it, of course, as he noticed everything in his hang-dog manner, with furtive glances under his eyebrows; and he thought that when he came into his kingdom—he often speculated upon that time—he would make these dogs pay for their insolence. Jack Forman was never drunk, no given amount of beer—and it was always given in Jack’s case, as he never paid for it—could make him wholly intoxicated; but when he was in that state, which he explained himself as having “an extry pint in him,” Jack would stand up, holding on by the horse-trough in front of the Seven Stars, and shake his disengaged fist at young Tom riding past, and express his

wish to wring young Tom's neck. Mr. Benthall, who had succeeded Mr. Ashurst as head-master of the school, was soon on excellent terms with Mr. Creswell, and thus had an opportunity of getting an insight into young Tom's character—an opportunity which rendered him profoundly thankful that that interesting youth was no longer numbered among his scholars, and caused him much wonderment as to how Trollope, who was the curate of a neighbouring parish, who had been chosen for young Tom's private tutor, could possibly get on with his pupil. Mr. Trollope, a mild, gentlemanly, retiring young man, with a bashful manner and a weak voice, found himself utterly unable to cope with the lout, who mocked at him before his face and mimicked him behind his back, and refused to be taught or guided by him in any way. So Mr. Trollope, after speaking to the lout's father, and finding but little good resulting therefrom, contented himself with setting exercises which were never done, and marking out lessons which were never learned, and bearing a vast amount of contumely and unpleasantness for the sake of a salary which was very regularly paid.

It must not be supposed that his son's strongly marked characteristics passed unobserved by Mr. Creswell, or that they failed to cause him an immensity of pain. The man's life had been so hard and earnest, so engrossing and so laborious, that he had only allowed himself two subjects for distraction, occasionally indulged in: one, regret for his wife; the other, hope in his son. As time passed away and he grew older, the first lessened and the other grew. His Jenny had been an angel on earth, he thought, and was now an angel in heaven, and the period was nearing, rapidly nearing, when, as he himself humbly hoped, he might be permitted to join her. Then his son would take his place, with no ladder to climb, no weary heart-burning and hard slaving to go through, but with the position achieved, the ball at his foot. In Mr. Creswell's own experience he had seen a score of men, whose fathers had been inferior to him in natural talent and business capacity, and in luck, which was not the least part of the affair, holding their own with the landed gentry whose ancestry had been "county people" for ages past, and playing at squires with as much grace and tact as if cotton-twist and coal-dust were things of which they might have

heard, indeed, but with which they had never been brought into contact. It had been the dream of the old man's life that his son should be one of these. The first idea of the purchase of Woolgreaves, the lavish splendour with which the place had been rehabilitated and with which it was kept up, the still persistent holding on to business and superintending, though with but rare intervals, his own affairs, all sprang from this hope. The old gentleman's tastes were simple in the extreme. He hated grandeur, disliked society, had had far more than enough of business worries. There was plenty, more than plenty, for him and his nieces to live on in affluence, but it had been the dearest wish of his heart to leave his son a man of mark, and do it he would.

Did he really think so? Not in his inmost heart. The keen eyes which had been accustomed for so long to read human nature like a book refused to be hoodwinked; the keen sense used to sift and balance human motives refused to be paltered with; the logical powers which deduced effect from cause refused to be stifled or led astray. To no human being were Tom Creswell's moral deficiencies and shortcomings more patent than to his father; it is needless to say that to none were they the subject of such bitter anguish. Mr. Creswell knew that his son was a failure, and worse than a failure. If he had been merely stupid there would have been not much to grieve over. The lad would have been a disappointment, as how many lads are disappointments to fond parents, and that was all. Hundreds, thousands of stupid young men filled their position in society with average success. Their money supported them, and they pulled through. He had hoped for something better than this for his son, but in the bitterness of his grief he allowed to himself that he would have been contented even with so much. But Mr. Creswell knew that his son was worse than stupid; that he was bad, low in his tastes and associations, sordid and servile in his heart, cunning, mean, and despicable. All the qualities which should have distinguished him—gentlemanly bearing, refined manners, cultivated tastes, generous impulses—all these he lacked: with a desire for sharp practice, hard-heartedness, rudeness towards those beneath him in the social scale, boorishness towards his equals, he was overflowing. Lout that he was, he had not even reverence for his father, had not even the decency to attempt to hide his

badness, but paraded it in the open day before the eyes of all, with a kind of sullen pride. And that was to be the end of all Mr. Creswell's plotting and planning, all his hard work and high hopes? For this he had toiled, and slaved, and speculated? Many and many a bitter hour did the old man pass shut away in the seclusion of his library, thinking over the bright hopes which he had indulged in as regarded his son's career, and the way in which they had been slighted; the bright what might have been, the dim what was. Vainly the father would endeavour to argue with himself, that the boy was as yet but a boy; that when he became a man he would put away the things which were not childish indeed, for then would there have been more hope, but bad, and in the fulness of time develop into what had been expected of him. Mr. Creswell knew to the contrary. He had watched his son for years with too deep an interest not to have perceived that as the years passed away, the light lines in the boy's character grew dim and faint, and the dark lines deepened in intensity. Year by year the boy became harder, coarser, more calculating, and more avaricious. As a child he had lent his pocket money out on usury to his school-fellows, and now he talked to his father about investments and interest in a manner which would have pleased some parents and amused others, but which brought anything but pleasure to Mr. Creswell as he marked the keen hungry look in the boy's sunken eyes, and listened to his half-framed and abortive but always sordid plans.

Between father and son there was not the smallest bond of sympathy; that Mr. Creswell had brought himself to confess. How many score times had he looked into the boy's face hoping to see there some gleam of filial love, and had turned away bitterly disappointed! How often had he tried to engage the lad in topics of conversation which he imagined would have been congenial to him, and on which he might have suffered himself to be drawn out, but without the slightest success. The jovial miller who lived upon the Dee was not one whit less careless than Tom Creswell about the opinion which other folks entertained of him, so long as you did not interfere with any of his plans. Even the intended visit of Mrs. Ashurst and Marian to Woolgreaves elicited very little remark from him, although the girls imagined it might not be quite acceptable to him, and consulted together as to how the news should be broken to the do-

mestic bashaw. After a great deal of cogitation and suggestion, it was decided that the best plan would be to take the tyrant at a favourable opportunity—at meal-time, for instance—and to approach the subject in a light and airy manner, as though it were of no great consequence, and was only mentioned for the sake of something to say. The plot thus conceived was duly carried out two days afterwards, on an occasion when, from the promptitude and agility with which he wielded his knife and fork, and the stertorous grunts and lip smackings which accompanied his performance, it was rightly judged that Master Tom was enjoying his luncheon with an extra relish. Mr. Creswell was absent; he seldom attended at the luncheon table, and the girls interchanged a nod of intelligence, and prepared to commence the play. They had had but little occasion or opportunity for acting, and were consequently nervous to a degree.

"Did you see much of Mrs. Ashurst in— in poor Mr. Ashurst's time, at the school, Tom?" commenced Gertrude, with a good deal of hesitation and a profound study of her plate.

"No, no, not much—quite enough!" returned Tom, without raising his head.

"Why quite enough, Tom?" came in Maud to the rescue. "She is a most delightful woman, I'm sure."

"Most charming," threw in Gertrude, a little undecidedly, but still in support.

"Ah, very likely," said Tom. "We didn't see much of her—the day boys I mean; but Peacock and the other fellows who boarded at Mr. Ashurst's declared she used to water the beer, and never sent back half the fellows' towels and sheets when they left."

"How disgraceful! how disgusting!" burst out Maud. "Mrs. Ashurst is a perfect lady, and—oh what wretches boys are!"

"Screech away! I don't mind," said the philosophic Tom. "Only what's up about this? What's the matter with old Mother Ashurst?"

"Nothing is the matter with Mrs. Ashurst, your father's friend, Tom," said Gertrude, trying a bit of dignity, and failing miserably therein, for Gertrude was a lovable, kissable, Dresden china style of beauty, without a particle of dignity in her whole composition. "Mrs. Ashurst is your father's friend, sir, at least the widow of his old friend, and your father has asked her to come and stay here on a visit, and—and we all hope you'll be polite to her." It was

seldom that Gertrude achieved such a long sentence, or delivered one with so much force. It was quite plain that Mrs. Ashurst was a favourite of hers.

"Oh," said Tom, "all right! Old Mother Ashurst's coming here on a visit is she? All right!"

"And Miss Ashurst comes with her," said Maud.

"Oh Lord!" cried Tom Creswell. "Miss Prim coming too! That'll be a clear saving of the governor's vinegar and olives all the time she's here. She's a nice creature, she is." And he screwed up his mouth with an air of excessive distaste.

"Well, at all events she's going to be your father's guest, and we must all do our best to make the visit pleasant to them," said Gertrude, who, like most people who are most proud of what they do least well, thought she was playing dignity admirably.

"Oh, I don't care!" said Tom. "If the governor likes to have them here, and you two girls are so sweet upon them all of a sudden, I say, all right. Only look here—no interference with me in any way. The sight of me mustn't make the old lady break down and burst out blubbing, or anything of that sort, and no asking me how I'm getting on with my lessons, and that kind of thing. Stow that, mind!"

"You needn't trouble yourself, I think," said Maud; "it is scarcely likely that either Mrs. or Miss Ashurst will feel very keen interest in you or your pursuits."

And out of Maud's flashing eyes, and through Maud's tightly compressed lips, the sarcasm came cutting like a knife.

But when their visitors had been but a very short time established at Woolgreaves, it became evident not merely to Mr. Creswell, but to all in the house, that Master Tom had at last met with some one who could exercise influence over him, and that that some one was Marian Ashurst. It was the treatment that did it. Tom had been alternately petted and punished, scolded and spoiled, but he had never been turned into ridicule before, and when Marian tried that treatment on him he succumbed at once. He confessed he had always thought that "he could not stand chaff," and now he knew it. Marian's badinage was, as might be supposed, of a somewhat grave and serious order. Tom's bluntness, uncouthness, aversion, and self-love were constantly betraying themselves in his conversation and conduct, and each of them offered an admirable target at which Marian fired telling shots. The girls were at first astonished and then

delighted, as was Mr. Creswell, who had a faint hope that under the correction thus lightly administered his son might be brought to see how objectionable were certain of his views and proceedings. The lout himself did not like it at all. His impossibility of standing "chaff," or of answering it, rendered him for the first time a nonentity in the family circle; his voice, usually loud and strident, was hushed whenever Marian came into the room. The domestic atmosphere at Woolgreaves was far more pleasant than it had been for some time, and Mr. Creswell thought that the "sweet little girl" was not merely a "dead hand at a bargain," but that she possessed the brute-taming power, in a manner hitherto undreamed of. Decidedly she was a very exceptional person, and more highly gifted than any one would suppose.

Tom hated her heartily, and chafed inwardly because he did not see his way to revenging himself on her. He had not the wit to reply when Marian turned him into ridicule, and he dared not answer her with mere rudeness, so he remained silent and sulky, brooding over his rage, and racking his brains to try and find a crack in his enemy's armour—a vulnerable place. He found it at last, but, characteristically, took no notice at the time, waiting for his opportunity. That came. One day, after luncheon, when her mother had gone up for a quiet nap, and the girls were practising duets in the music-room, Marian set out for a long walk across the hard, dry, frost-covered fields to the village; the air was brisk and bracing, and the girl was in better spirits than usual. She thoroughly appreciated the refined comforts and the luxurious living of Woolgreaves, and the conduct of the host and his nieces towards her had been so perfectly charming, that she had almost forgotten that her enjoyment of those luxuries was but temporary, and that very shortly she would have to face the world in a worse position than she had as yet occupied, and to fight the great battle of life, too, for her mother and herself. Often in the evening, as she sat in the drawing-room buried in the soft cushions of the sofa, dreamily listening to the music which the girls were playing, lazily watching her mother cozily seated in the chimney corner, and old Mr. Creswell by her, quietly beating time to the tune; the firelight flickering over the furniture, and appointments bespeaking wealth and comfort, she would fall into a kind of half-trance, in which she would believe that the

great desire of her life had been accomplished, and that she was rich—placed far above the necessity of toil or the torture of penury. Nor was the dream ever entirely dispelled. The comfort and luxury were there, and as to the term of her enjoyment, how could that be prolonged? Her busy brain was filled with that idea this afternoon, and so deeply was she in thought, that she scarcely started at a loud crashing of branches close beside her, and only had time to draw back as Tom Creswell's chesnut mare, with Tom Creswell on her back, landed into the field beside her.

"Good heavens, Tom, how you startled me!" cried Marian; "and what's the matter with Kitty? She's covered with foam and trembling all over!"

"I've been taking it out of the blunder-headed brute, that's all, Miss Ashurst," said the lout, with a vicious dig of his spurs into the mare's sides, which caused her to snort loudly and to rear on end. "Ah, would you, you brute? She's got it in her head that she won't jump to-day, and I'm showing her she will, and she must, if I choose. Stand still, now, and get your wind, d'ye hear?" And he threw the reins on the mare's neck, and turned round in his saddle, facing Marian. "I'm glad I've met you, Miss Ashurst," he continued, with a very evil light in his sullen face, "for I've got something to say to you, and I'm just in the mood to say it now."

He looked so thoroughly vicious and despicable that Marian's first feeling of alarm changed into disgust, as she looked at him and said: "What is it, Tom—say on!"

"Oh, I intend to," said the lout, with a baleful grin. "I intend to say on, whether you like it or not. I've waited a precious long time, and I intend to speak now. Look here. You've had a fine turn at me, you have! Chaffin' me and pokin' your fun at me, and shuttin' me up whenever I spoke. You're doosid clever, you are, and so sharp, and all that; and I'm such a fool, I am, but I've found out your game for all that!"

"My game, Tom! Do you know what you're talking about, and to whom you are talking?"

"Oh, don't I! That's just it. I'm talking to Miss Marian Ashurst, and Miss Marian Ashurst's game is money-making! Lord bless you, they know all about it down in the village—the Crokers, and the Whichers, and them, they're full of stories

of you when you was a little girl, and they all know you're not changed now. But look here, keep it to yourself, or take it away from our place. Don't try it on here. It's quite enough to have those two girls saddled on the family, but they are relations, and that's some excuse. We don't want any more, mark that. My father's getting old now, and he's weak, and don't see things so clearly as he did, but I do. I see why your mother's got hold of those girls, and how you're trying to make yourself useful to the governor. I heard you offering to go through the Home Farm accounts the other day!"

"I offered because your—because—oh, Tom! how dare you! You wicked, wicked boy!"

"Oh yes, I know, very likely, but I won't let any one interfere with me. You thought you were going to settle yourself on us. I don't intend it. I'm a boy, all right, but I know how to get my own way, and I means to have it. This hot-tempered brute" (pointing to the pony) "has found that out, and you'll find it out, too, before I have done with you. That's all. Get on, now."

The pony sprang into the air as he gave her a savage cut with his whip, and he rode off, leaving Marian in an agony of shame and rage.

POURING OIL UPON THE WAVES.

In a plain but effective letter—effective because plain—the stewardess of the hapless *Hibernia* lately gave a narrative of the fate of that ship, and of the sufferings of some, at least, of those who were on board. The tale of shipwreck need not be told here in full; it is noticed in connexion with one only among a crowd of incidents. A well-appointed ocean mail steamer left New York on a certain day about the middle of November last, proud in her majesty, and well laden with passengers, mails, and merchandise. All went well for about a week, when one of those stormy periods commenced which so calamitously marked the closing weeks of the year. Things went wrong; the machinery broke down, and the ship filled to such an extent that a precipitate retreat became absolutely necessary. On the 25th of the month the boats were lowered, and the passengers and crew embarked in them. By far the greater number of the sufferers never saw land again. The most successful of the precarious fleet, had on board the stewardess of the steamer. When the occupants of this boat reached land, this stewardess was one of those who wrote brief narratives of the shipwreck. She told how, during the boat voyage the captain poured oil upon the waves, to smooth

their roughness, and to lessen in some degree the splash of water into the open boat—not actually to level the rolling billows, but to allay their wild tossing and breaking into spray. Whether oil was taken on board the boat for that purpose we are not told; we only know that it was thus used, two or more times, during that eventful 25th of November.

This subject of oil upon the waves is a curious one. It is by no means of modern date, either in its knowledge or its application; and yet there is only an indistinct appreciation of it amongst us generally. We do not place it among our every-day truths.

In ages long past, the effect of oil in stilling the waves was known to many grades of seafaring men. Pliny stated that the divers in the Mediterranean and the Archipelago were wont to take in their mouths a bit of sponge dipped in oil, and that they were by this means enabled to remain longer under water than other divers who were not so provided. As the diver wants to retain all the breath he can, and as long as he can, it is difficult at first to see how the attainment of the desired object could be facilitated by this agency; but an explanation soon offers itself. The object of taking oil into the mouth was to calm those small waves on the surface of the sea, which prevent the light from being so steadily transmitted to the bottom as is necessary to enable the diver to find the small objects they search for without delay. By ejecting a little oil from the mouth, it rises to the surface, and, spreading out upon it, calms the waves sufficiently to admit a good daylight to penetrate through the water. The habit followed by many fishermen and boatmen gives probability to this explanation. Dr. Halley mentioned that he saw some of the Florida Indian divers remain under water two minutes at a time; and he proceeded to notice the effects of a thin film of oil in facilitating the divers' work. A century and a half ago the fishermen of some of the Hebrides were accustomed, when the sea was getting rough, to tie to the end of a cable a mass made chiefly of the fat of sea-fowl, and allow it to dip into the sea behind the rudder; the oil from the fat exerted a smoothing agency upon the waves. The Lisbon fishermen sometimes allay the waves on the bar across the Tagus, when they wish to cross, by means of a little oil. During the siege of Gibraltar in the last century, the British officers often observed the Spanish fishermen pour a little oil upon the sea, to enable them to see oysters at the bottom. Herring-fishers on the coast of Scotland can see from a long distance when and where a shoal is approaching; the water acquires a peculiar smoothness of appearance from the oil of the fish. Seal-catchers in the Arctic regions have often observed that, when the seals eat oily fish (which they often do), the surface of the sea above them becomes much smoother than at other parts. The ocean is often observed to have a peculiar quietness in the wake of a laden whale ship. This is due to the small quantity of oil which, somehow or

other, manages to exude from the vessel, perhaps pumped up with the bilge-water from the hold. Off some coasts, where fish are speared instead of netted, a little oil is poured on the water, to enable the fishers to see their prey below.

Dr. Franklin, who had an indefatigable habit of searching out a scientific explanation for everything that could be explained by science, resolved to experiment upon this subject of oil on water. He had read and heard and seen that oil is thus used, either to make voyaging more safe and pleasant or to enable the rays of light to penetrate the water, and he wished to know the reason why. He first tried a pond upon a common. Selecting the windward side, he poured a little oil on the water. Quickly it spread further and further over to leeward, until a considerable area of the pond had a very thin film, which calmed the water in a singular way. We rather suspect that some error has crept into the original account of this experiment; for it is difficult to believe that a teaspoonful of oil would render half an acre of watery surface as smooth as a looking-glass, which is the substance of Franklin's statement. On another occasion he made a deep harbour the scene of his experiments. He anchored a boat at a certain distance from the shore, and another boat made several short trips out to windward and home again. In this second boat a man had a bottle of oil, which he poured out in a very small but continuous stream through a hole in the cork. Franklin, seated in the first boat, watched the effect of the oil, while others watched on shore. Leeward of the anchored boat, little or no change was visible; but out windward the oily track spread far and wide, preventing the waves from breaking into ripple, foam, and surf.

The poor Hibernia was not by any means the first ship, the crew of which had cause to welcome the effect of oil upon the waves. About a century ago a Dutch East Indiaman made a voyage to the East, and fared pretty well until nearing the islands of Paul and Amsterdam. A storm then arose, and the captain poured out a few ounces of olive oil into the sea, to prevent the waves from breaking against and over the ship; the plan succeeded, and the ship went on her way. One of the passengers, in a letter to the Dutch ambassador at the court of St. James's, stated that the persons to whom he afterwards narrated this incident were so incredulous, that the officers and himself signed a certificate declaratory of its truthfulness, so hard did it seem to believe the effect of a very little oil upon a very great sea. Numerous examples of a similar character are to be found scattered here and there among the records of voyages. One of the many trading ships which ply between Manilla and Singapore had a singular oil adventure a few years ago. While on the voyage she encountered a very rough and unpleasant sea. Suddenly there appeared a peculiar smoothness of the sea; although the wind was still blowing, and the ship advanced favourably for three days over a sur-

face which had evidently oil upon it. Later information brought to light the fact that a brig had started shortly before with a cargo of cocoa-nut oil; some of the casks having been stove in by accident, the wasted oil was pumped out of the hold into the sea. The ships were two hundred miles apart, and yet the oily film reached from the one to the other. About ten or a dozen years ago a screw steamer, laden with corn, started from Copenhagen, to bend round the north of Jutland into the German Ocean. Just as she was coming near a stormy headland, the sea became very bad; the steamer shipped much water, the engine fires were gradually extinguished, the engines ceased to work, and the poor ship rolled helplessly on the water. A schooner was descried some few miles distant; and it was resolved that all hands should take to the boats, and pull from the steamer to the schooner. The crew poured some oil on the waves as they went, and were thus enabled to meet a somewhat less troubled sea than would otherwise have encountered them.

It seems to be now pretty well known how and why the oil acts in this friendly way: although some parts of the phenomenon still remain obscure. If it be attempted to raise waves upon the surface of oil in a vessel by the force of the wind, it will be found very difficult to succeed. The difficulty is probably due to the mutual cohesion among the particles of oil; there may be also less attraction between air and oil than between air and water. The effect is obviously far more physical than chemical. Dr. Franklin expressed his opinion that air is gradually frustrated, by the oil, in disturbing the tranquillity of water. First the wind, blowing over the water, rubs against the surface and raises it into wrinkles; then, the wind continuing, those wrinkles become the cause of little waves, and the little waves of greater waves, and so on until strong billows are the eventual result—produced not necessarily by a *violent* wind, for a moderate wind will do it if continuous. Such is the case under ordinary circumstances; but now for the oil. As a drop of oil spreads into a large and wonderfully thin film on the surface of water, there must be some kind of repulsion at work among its particles; but be this as it may, the thin film presents no points or roughnesses against which the wind may catch, no little file-teeth or saw-teeth to produce a wrinkle. The oil moves a little with the wind, acting as a sort of slide by the aid of which the air glides over the water. With a strong wind, every large wave becomes covered with a kind of rippled armour of small waves or wrinkles; and each of these wrinkles gives a hold by which the wind may further act; but if there be a film of oil on the surface, these small wrinkles are prevented from forming, although the large waves remain. What is done is, not to prevent large waves from rolling and heaving, but to arrest their increase by new waves formed on the back of them. What occurred to the boats off the coast of Denmark shows pretty clearly how the prevention is

brought about. Two boats were supplied with five gallons of oil each. While the men were tugging at the oars, the captain, in one of the boats, watched the advance of the waves, and at an opportune moment, when a sea appeared about to approach and swamp them, he caused a gill or half a pint of oil to be poured out of the can; the effect was as if the wave divided and fell off on either side of the boat. The captain economised his oil in the long boat so as to make it last well out till he reached the schooner; the mate in the lifeboat was a little too lavish, got rid of his oil too soon, and had to pull the latter part of the voyage against a very heavy sea.

Working men in some trades know a little of this oil subject, though not in connexion with waves. If a solution of sugar, or any one among a considerable number of other solutions, be boiling in an open vessel over the fire, and be in danger of boiling over, a little oil poured upon the surface will immediately make the violent bubbles subside. Still more simply, if we draw a mark with a piece of soap, round the interior of a vessel somewhere between the top of the vessel and the level of the boiling liquid, the oil in the soap forms a kind of magic ring, which prevents, or at least, retards, the rise of the ebullition above that point. Noxious and unhealthy vapours may to some extent be kept from rising by some such means.

A MODERN FRANKENSTEIN.

You have possibly heard the story of a foolish man who was so highly delighted with the performance of Punch in an itinerant show, that he immediately purchased the puppet at an exorbitant price, and took it home for his own private amusement. Likewise you have heard, or if not you have conjectured, that when the foolish man placed Punch on the table, and found him incapable of movement, he felt grievously disappointed.

But now I am going to tell you of something of which you certainly have not heard.

I am the foolish man.

My disappointment, as you have heard, or conjectured, was excessive. Without writing my autobiography, it will be sufficient if I come at once to the fact, that at the time of my absurd purchase, a varied and indiscriminate love of amusement had converted me into a sort of Sir Charles Coldstream. The notion of Punch jumping on the table for my sole entertainment, had brought with it a sense of refined selfishness that was almost overpowering. I recollect I once saw Mr. Macready's inimitable performance of Luke in the version of Massinger's *City Madam*, entitled *Riches*. Luke, a prodigal who had wasted his substance, and had afterwards, through the supposed death of his brother, become possessed of immense wealth, sat at the head of an enormous table, groaning with every sort of wine and viand, and he sat—alone. Here was a repast

for a score of guests, yet Luke feasted alone. This was his compensation for the misery he had endured during that period of his life when, already accustomed to luxury, he had been subjected to indignity and want. While everybody else feasted he had starved. Tit for tat. He now invited himself to a gorgeous banquet, from which everybody else was excluded. Luke was a very bad fellow, but there was something in his nature that harmonised with my own. I felt more glad than I ought to have been when he was regaling himself in his selfish fashion; less glad than I ought to have been when his brother returned to life, and retributive justice hurled him from his lofty eminence.

My feelings, when I brought home the puppet and laid it on the parlour table before me, must have been extremely similar to those of Luke when he first sat down to his feast. I had had my period of privation. I had not indeed suffered poverty, but I had lost the capability of being amused, which alone makes life tolerable. The people standing round the show from which Punch squeaked forth his paltry ribaldry had roared with laughter, while I was altogether unmoved. Now the tables were about to be turned. Punch should squeak for me alone; and that very fact might be sufficient to season his wretched jokes even for my dull palate.

One of my readers, looking extremely sagacious, wonders that I could be such a fool as to lay Punch on the table and expect him to get up of his own accord; and is willing to explain how the hand of the human performer, craftily inserted into the puppet, is the sole cause of its brief vitality. If, having purchased Punch, I had managed him after the approved fashion, moving his arms with two of my fingers and his head with a third, there would at least have been a method in my madness.

Exactly, I ought to have been amused by witnessing the twiddle of my own fingers. In that case a handkerchief knotted into that infantile semblance of a confessional, wherewith nurses vainly try to amuse squalling children, would have answered my purpose. The verb "amuse" rose before me in the purely passive form. I did not want to amuse myself, but to be amused—that is, by somebody or something that was not myself, and the sight of Punch in the street suggested to me that the puppet was the destined source of amusement.

So far so good; but, as the sagacious reader has perceived, I have not yet accounted for my extreme folly in believing that Punch was capable of spontaneous motion. The wish that the inanimate figure might squeak and jump about was ridiculous enough, but it was not without precedent. The German poet Heine once wished that every paving-stone might have an oyster in its shell, and that the earth might be visited by heavy showers of champagne; and a town where the window-panes are made of barley-sugar, and ready-roasted pigs, with knives and forks stuck into their bodies, run about squeaking, "Come, eat me"—such a town has for years been the coveted

Utopia of many an infant epicure. But why, in my case, did the floating desire condense itself into a firm belief? Why did such a trivial wish become father to such a very audacious thought?

If the sagacious reader persists in this question he has never known what it is to be really in love. For if he has experienced the sort of love, out of which such works as *Romeo and Juliet* can be fashioned, he must be perfectly aware that there is a state of mind in which wish and belief are entirely commensurate with each other. Tell a lover, fired with the sort of passion, which I now have in view, that his idol is quick-tempered, greedy, vain, selfish—give her, in short, any attribute that militates against perfection, and support your assertions with any amount of evidence, and you will find that the false faultless image, which is set up in his own mind, is not to be overthrown by living witness or by lively argument. No; he worships a mental ideal, and the earthly figure which he has chosen as its corresponding actuality must exactly resemble it, in spite of every obstacle. When the idol, so strenuously bolstered up, falls down, it comes with a crash, as in the case of *Othello*.

Well, the desire of seeing a spontaneously jumping Punch, had with me reached the intensity of belief, and as the figure lay on the table before me, I honestly expected it to get up and execute some of its wonted feats. It was exactly eight o'clock when I commenced my experiment, and when the timepiece had struck the half-hour I was still, with fixed eyes, staring at a motionless Punch. When I heard the indication that an hour was completed, I was in despair.

For about ten minutes, as I learned by the timepiece, my mind was a perfect blank; but I was roused by a sharp ring at the bell. Impelled by I know not what instinct, I strode to the street door, and tearing it open, saw an uncouth person with unkempt hair, holding in his hand a vessel, apparently of tarnished silver, which he proffered for a moment and then withdrew. Following the motion of his arm, I snatched it from him, and closing the door with a bang, rushed back into the dining-room, an inner voice telling me that I now held an elixir of life which would animate the puppet. I sprinkled a few drops on the rigid face, and inclined my own head towards it with feverish expectation. A smart stroke on he left ear, causing me considerable pain, startled me from my contemplation. I raised myself to an erect posture, and to my infinite delight, saw Punch sitting upright, and brandishing his cudgel with more than wonted vigour. (By the way, I should have said before that I put this weapon in its proper place, with the arms of the figure folded across it, when I first laid my purchase on the table.)

Punch not only moved, and rattled his tiny legs, but his eyes seemed to flash with a vivid intelligence which I had never perceived in the show, and he appeared to meditate some decisive action. He did not meditate long, but aimed a

second blow at my head, which I fortunately avoided, the removal of a tangible object for the exercise of his vigour causing him to fall sideways on the table. The pain which he apparently felt, when his own wooden head came into collision with the board, which had only an oilcloth covering, was clearly expressed by an increased brightness in his eyes. After viewing me maliciously for a few seconds, he dealt a blow at my table-lamp, the glass leg of which he demolished, causing the top to fall with a heavy crash, and leaving me no other light than such as was afforded by the fire in the grate. A violent bound then took him to my side-board, when with insane fury he effected the destruction of my wine glasses and cruets.

How little do we know what is good for us! Not many minutes before I had lamented the want of animation in the hideous figure I had so foolishly purchased, and now I would have given anything to see it deprived of the wild vitality I had still more foolishly thrust upon it.

The world in general is accustomed to look upon Punch as simply a ridiculous figure. On their way to the spots where they pursue the more serious occupations of life, gentlemen of education and intelligence have their attention arrested by the sound of a squeaking voice with which they have been familiar from childhood, and join a small crowd intent on witnessing the performance of a drama which causes universal laughter. They do not much understand what is passing before them, for the plot of the play has undergone considerable changes since the days when their mammas, at a considerable expense, bespoke a special performance of Punch for the amusement of the juvenile party assembled to celebrate their birthday. Possibly one of the combats at the time of their pause is between Punch and a very stiff dragon, which opens its jaws and fiercely squeezes the head of the puppet between them. They did not see such a dragon in the days of their youth; but they are not astonished at the innovation. The whole affair is too trifling to awaken anything like surprise, however adverse the performance may be to the law of precedent. The educated and intelligent spectators feel, however, that the soundless bite of an ill-shaped dragon is not sufficient to repay them for their slight sacrifice of time; an instinct tells them they ought to hear the crack of the cudgel against the wooden head. So they take care to see Punch strike one of his quasi-human adversaries, and to see the head of the adversary knocked smartly against the proscenium before they resume their journey.

The character of a man of education and intelligence may be tested by the precise moment at which he quits the semicircle of spectators ranged before Punch's show. Mere vulgarians, comprising especially those errand boys who have been enjoined not to lose a moment, are sure to stop till the performance is over, when they usually follow in the track of the retiring exhibitor, and therefore afford no criterion at all. But with the man of education and intelligence, who is sure never to see either the

beginning or the end of the play, the case is altogether different. When he is liberal, he graciously waits till the cashier of the show comes with the hat, that he may pay a fair price for the enjoyment he has received. When he is stingy he takes fright at the hat, and its first appearance, even in the distance, is the signal for his departure. When he is merely careless, he retires indifferently, just as the fit takes him, without waiting for or shunning the opportunity of payment. But, however the men of education and intelligence may differ from each other, they all agree in one point. Every one of them, if on quitting the little crowd he runs against a friend who passes, leaving the show unnoticed, feels bound to apologise for having taken part in a recreation so frivolous. Some refer sentimentally to the delight afforded by reminiscences of the innocent days of children; some wisely make the novel remark that "men are but children of a larger growth;" some, more honest, confess that it is their weakness to like a laugh, however obtained, and to add that they look upon Punch as an expedient for the promotion of hilarity that has never been known to fail.

And so they walk away to keep important appointments, and to transact important business, little reflecting that they have witnessed one of the most awful tragedies ever offered to the contemplation of mankind. They have, in fact, seen represented a series of murders, all perpetrated by brutal means, that would raise the horror of civilised Europe if brought before the notice of a legal tribunal, and all accompanied by reckless derision on the part of the murderer, an uncouth being, whose form and voice seem to separate him from the rest of mankind. It is, I believe, by Charles Lamb that Punch is regarded as a compound of Richard the Third and Don Juan. But the wicked Englishman perishes on Bosworth Field, and the Spanish libertine is borne away by fiends; whereas there is no retributive justice in the tragedy of Punch. By hanging the hangman, the hook-nosed rascal shows that he is superior to human law; by killing the Evil One, who appears not as a tempter, but as a Nemesis, he shows that he is beyond the reach even of superhuman punishment. Of all the plays ever invented, there is none so thoroughly wicked as that in which the English Punch, widely differing from his Neapolitan ancestor, is the principal personage.

This is no digression. It is necessary for my readers to regard Punch from a serious point of view, and to know that I am capable of regarding him in a like manner, if they would appreciate the horror which I felt when a living, moving Punch, apparently an incarnation of the spirit of malice, was carrying on his work of destruction before my eyes, visible only by fire-light. A statue, associated with nothing but cheerfulness—say, for instance, one of the insipid figures copied from some creation of Canova—when standing in a passage, where the rays of the moon, unmingled with other light, fall upon it, becomes a ghastly spectacle. In

mere rigidity, under certain aspects, there is terror, and I have no doubt that every one of Madame Tussaud's rooms, inspected by the grey light of early dawn, becomes a Chamber of Horrors. What, then, could be more awful than the deformed Punch, with a thousand murders upon his head, which, if not real, were, at any rate, as real as himself, brandishing his instrument of destruction, with grievous efficiency, and displaying hideous features, rendered more hideous still by the red glare by which they were illumined? He seemed a triumphant demon, sporting in his proper element.

Not without a sense of fear, I made several desperate clutches at the figure, hoping to arrest the work of destruction, but I only received as many severe raps on the knuckles. Some other measure must be adopted. A thought struck me. I left the room and descended into the kitchen, where I heard raps and crashes repeated in the room above. The servants had retired to rest.

Presently I returned to the parlour armed with a large dish-cover, which was generally used to retain warmth in haunches of mutton and other joints of more than ordinary dimensions. Punch was on the table where I had first placed him, and I was pleased to notice that my looking-glass was still unbroken. A languor, probably caused by over-exertion, had evidently taken possession of the destroyer, and seizing my opportunity, I clapped the cover over him, and resolutely held it by the handle. The clattering noise I heard within showed me that the activity of the captive had returned. The sound only served to increase the vigour of my pressure.

At this moment I heard the latch-key in the door of the house, and shortly afterwards the door of the room opened, and a young gentleman, who lodged in an upper apartment, and with whom I was on familiar terms, made his appearance. He cast a look of surprise at the broken lamp, but his attention was soon absorbed by myself. What in the name of wonder could induce me to stand in the midst of semi-darkness, pressing a large dish-cover on the table with all my might, he could not divine, and with sundry expletives he acknowledged his perplexity. "What was I up to?" This was his question, couched in an idiom which he had studied with much assiduity.

Now, I am not given to mendacity, neither was I guilty of any crime that I wished to conceal. I was merely doing my little utmost to prevent the destruction of my property. And yet something prevented me from telling the honest truth. Put yourself in my place, reader, and ask yourself whether there is a friend in the world to whom you would acknowledge that you were keeping a recently-animated puppet under a dish-cover? With impudence suggested by despair, I answered that I was doing nothing. My reply seemed to be more satisfactory than I had reason to expect, and indeed to suggest some meaning that I had not intended. My friend looked exceedingly knowing, winked archly, thrust his tongue into

his cheek, and left the room without further question.

Relieved by his departure, I unwittingly relaxed the pressure of my hand, when the dish-cover, as if impelled by a spring, at once flew up to the ceiling, and Punch, released from captivity, was in full enjoyment of a liberty which he at once expanded into licence, bounding to a small table, which was used to sustain small fragile curiosities, and demolishing them with demoniac delight. Unable to endure any longer the wanton tyranny of the reckless puppet, I seized the poker, and fiercely struck the head. The body being of a yielding material—glazed chintz, I believe—offered no resistance, and consequently the head was merely bent beneath my blow without receiving any injury whatever. Some other mode of attack must be adopted. Flinging down the poker and snatching up the tongs, I firmly laid hold of Punch, and holding the tongs at arms' length, conveyed him to the fire.

Nothing I ever endured in my life equalled the horror I felt during the few moments that followed. The head of the puppet was pinched tight between the tongs, but the eyes rolled, as if Punch were aware of the fate in store for him, and the little legs kicked convulsively. I plunged him into a yawning gulf of fire, caused by the separation of two large coals, and then thrust him down with the poker. During this process he writhed as if in the most intense agony, and his eyes were fixed upon me with a mixed expression of rage and pain, until the small flames that arose beneath, began to consume him, and he was gradually changed into a black shapeless mass. The end of the operation was marked by a prolonged squeak, that seemed to enter my very soul. I sank back exhausted into an arm-chair.

On the following morning I was aroused by the servant's opening the shutters. Raking the ashes I discovered a lump of charred wood, which was evidently the head of the ill-starred puppet. My friend entered the room, and asked me if I was better, with more of mirth and less of anxiety than usually accompanies such questions, when addressed to an invalid. In reply to some searching inquiries, he replied, with a scarcely-suppressed smile, that on the previous night he had found me, with a very flushed countenance, violently pressing a dish-cover on the table, and evidently not very steady on my feet. The beer-boy, who called for the empty cans, reported that on the previous evening I had, somewhat to his surprise, taken in the beer myself. When I endeavoured to gather the general opinion as to the destruction of the lamp and glasses, which still lay in fragments, the servant stated her belief that the cat had been in the room.

Surely, my knowledge of my own affairs is better than of other persons. If my readers choose to favour an hypothesis, based upon the evidence of the beer-boy and the servant, and to decide that I might indeed have bought Punch, but that all the wonderful events that followed the purchase were the result of a

heated brain, I can't help it. I have told the truth to the best of my belief, and if they object to receive it the fault is theirs: not mine.

GHOSTS.

Ghosts often come to my window,
And knock at my chamber door,
Or sit by my side at dinner,
Or walk with me on the shore.
I know their villanous faces,
As they giggle, and sneer, and jar;
They will not be gone, so I'll count them,
And tell them what they are!

Ghosts of ambitions buried,
Ghosts of a love grown cold,
Ghosts of a fortune squandered,
Ghosts of a tale that's told,
Ghosts of a traitorous friendship,
And of follies nine times nine!
Come Wizard! come! and lay them
In the deep Red Sea!—of Wine!

GOOD COMPANY FOR NEW YEAR'S DAY.

"KING'S College Hospital, Portugal-street, Lincoln's-inn-fields. The committee of this institution desire to thank the many friends who have so kindly assisted them with presents of flowers and evergreens for the Christmas decorations of their hospital, and for furnishing the Christmas Tree for the children in the Pantia Ralli ward. The tree will be lighted this evening at about four o'clock. There are no infectious cases in the ward, and visitors desirous of seeing the decorations on the tree will be admitted at any time by giving their name to the porter at the door. A large portion of the decorations have been executed by the patients themselves, and have been carried out with so much taste as to be well worth a visit. F. A. Bedwell, vice-chairman."

This was the invitation to the public which appeared in the papers on New Year's morning, and which I, as one of the public, resolved to accept.

The first thing, of course, that struck the eye on entering the Pantia Ralli ward was the large, gaily decorated tree in the centre of the long, clean, airy room; then the holly wreaths, the floral emblems, the pretty pictures, and bright illuminated texts covering the walls. The first thing that struck the heart was the quiet happiness and homelike look of the groups clustered about the beds. Each little knot made a family party of its own, and brought the home into the hospital. Mothers and fathers, perhaps with one or two elder children, perhaps with a baby to help in the general fun, had come to share in the plea-

sure of their little sufferers; and wherever one turned, some sweet and tender picture, touched in by the hand of living nature, seemed to bring one closer to one's fellow-creatures, for sympathy and pity.

Here was one mild, decent-looking family—the father a well-mannered mechanic, the mother a soft-eyed, pretty young woman, with a baby and a sturdy little rogue of five—come to see a very lovely little girl, brought in last night, with some acute affection of the lungs. Quite unconsciously the young mother made many a touching picture, the like of which Raffaele saw and noted in his day, as she pressed her sick child's fevered face against her own cool cheek, and soothed its moments of weariness with her pretty motherly devices—pretty, if at times not quite wise. This family interested me much on account of the winsomeness of the woman, the exceeding sweetness of the child, and the polished manner of the father, who was a foreigner—Swiss or German, I imagine. When I asked him what ailed his child, I got what seemed to be the stereotyped answer of the place, "the bronchitis;" but I made out the underlying causes of bad air and unwholesome lodging, to which so much of our disease in towns is owing. "If I had the means," he said, "I would live in the country. We would all do more than we do, if we had the means," he added, with a pleasant smile.

Passing from them, I came upon a woman dandling in her arms a dark-eyed diminutive child, the smallest for its age I have ever seen. It was eighteen months old, and was not larger than a small monkey, or good sized doll. But it was sprightly and intelligent, though also very fretful and irritable, and with good food and nursing would probably broaden out into something more normally human than it looked at present. Here was a widow with a careworn look and shabby weeds, too sad to be playful, holding listlessly on her knee a pallid attenuated infant, more than half of whose malady was evidently due to starvation; here a young woman, rather flashily dressed, and of a good humoured coarse pattern of humanity, played with her now healthy baby, which she had brought to see the tree out of gratitude for the "kind treatment it had received from the good gentlemen and dear sisters of the ward."

Some of the brighter and more original of the children are for ever imitating all they see done by their elders, as children generally do, and one, whose chest had often been

sounded with the stethoscope, silently stole that instrument out of the physician's pocket, where she knew it lived, and tried his legs as he had tried her lungs—listening with a wise countenance to the mysterious revelations it made.

How pretty it was, if sometimes so sad, to see the various attitudes and conditions of the children! One little fellow, convalescent but still weak, was seated in a chair mounted on a table, and looked really pantomimically regal in his small scarlet wrapper; another, enveloped in a blanket, was laid across its mother's lap and arm in the attitude of Henriette Brown's "Sick Child;" some sat up in their cots, playing with the toys spread out on the bed-shelf before them; others laid down quietly in theirs, not speaking and not moving, only turning their eyes longingly to the fairy tree which was to gladden and relieve their weary sufferings.

Some of the cases were very interesting, and I may as well state them now before I go on to the tree. A child was brought in, dying from croup. When at the last gasp they cut into the windpipe, inserted a silver tube for the child to breathe through, and so saved its life. I saw the scar; which will remain; but the little one itself was fat and lively, and apparently in perfect health. This too was "the bronchitis" when I asked the mother, and the scar was "for a lump in her throat." One child, whom I saw running about like a miniature lamplighter, had been paralysed a few months ago; another had been cured of an awful outburst of scrofula; but, perhaps, the most striking of all the cases, were those of three children who had been brought in, dying of atrophy. As they were unable to be fed naturally, owing to uncontrollable sickness, the physician ordered beef-tea poultices to be wrapped round the loins and spine, which at once revived them; and then began the long labour of building up what exposure and privation had nearly destroyed. For between two and three weeks they were fed with raw meat, torn by the nurses into the finest possible filaments, and reduced to a pulp—very small quantities of which they gave continually, thus nourishing the little ones by slow degrees until they were able to be fed in a more ordinary manner.

But though science can do much, it cannot do everything; and with all the lives saved and the successful cases to the good of the account, there are others which are hopeless from the beginning. One was there this afternoon—a beautiful little crea-

ture, so far as mere features went—with a huge tumour on the top of its head, malignant it is feared, and almost as large as the head itself. As yet, the tumour has not touched the brain, and the child is quite natural and intelligent; but the sadder phase has to come, and not even the administration of the Pantia Ralli ward can do more than alleviate the suffering that must be, and gladden the poor little life, so far as it may be gladdened, for its brief remaining term.

Nothing impressed me more than the extreme kindness of the young men towards the children. They were like big elder brothers among the little ones, and very unlike the conventional medical student of comic literature. Perhaps the adoption of Sister nurses has had something to do with the improvement, for there are no paid upper nurses in the hospital, which is served by the Sisters of St. John's House. King's College Hospital was the first to adopt Sisters as the head nurses; and the result has been most satisfactory. More intelligent and more conscientious than the paid class, they manage the patients and children better, carry out the orders of the doctor more faithfully, and aid him more effectually by the accuracy of their own observations. The name of hospital nurse, once synonymous with brutality and callous ignorance, is now a guarantee for the best kind of sick tending; and who shall say where the refining influence of that reform ends? Besides, this self-devotion gives educated women a work to do that is as valuable for themselves as for those for whom it is done. It gives the lonely, duties; the unemployed, occupation; the solitary, interests and objects for love and pity. There is no sickly sentimentalism of any kind about them, no fantastic excess, no advanced ritualism, or revivalism, or any other one-sided manifestation of enthusiasm; all is done in a quiet self-controlled purposeful manner; and the work to be done, not themselves in their mode of doing it, is the main object which each has before her, and each tries to carry out to perfection.

As I entered the ward, the Sisters were decorating the tree, the young assistants helping; and one or two sturdy little fellows were made happy by being allowed to hand up the toys that were to be hung. Everything was done so deftly, so neatly, with such good management; no one got into any other's way; there was no confusion, no irritation, no contradictory orders, or opposing wills; everything was so peaceful and so happy, and the very children,

being for the most part ill or delicate, were less uproarious in their pleasure than would have been the case had all been in full health. The most uproarious of all was a self-assertive mite, who could just toddle and tumble about alone, and whose organ of acquisitiveness was decidedly large, for she wanted all she saw, and screamed lustily when she did not get it.

Now began to come in the physicians connected with the hospital, and the ladies belonging to them; and it was pretty and eloquent to see how the faces of the children lightened up as they entered, some of the bolder indeed running across the floor for a kindly word or look; and one pretty babe holding up her mouth to be kissed, as confidently as if she had been at home. One of the ladies, the wife of one of the chief physicians, a young mother herself, seemed to be a veritable centre of happiness wherever she moved; and beautiful as she is, she never looked more lovely than when talking to these poor little ones, playing with the babies, and soothing the sick and fractious, with just as much tenderness and dear maternal sympathy as if she had been in her own nursery at home. God bless her for her good work in the "Ralli," so lovingly and faithfully performed!

The ward was now quite full. The toys were hung, the blinds drawn down, the wax tapers and coloured gelatine lamps were lighted, and the full glories of the tree were revealed. The place was all alive with sickly little creatures, with pale faces and large bright eyes, brighter and larger from illness, clustering nearer and nearer to the magic garden in the centre. For not only the children in the Ralli ward itself, but all the children in the hospital who could be taken from bed, and such of the out-patients as were brought, were admitted to the festival. Some invalid women came tottering in from the nearer wards, one looking like an Orphic ghost, with only a white pinched face seen from the folds of the blanket she had wrapped round her; a few douce, fatherly, invalid men gathered quietly at the end of the room, near the door; grown girls and boys, all pale and wan, and feeble yet, poor young things! were also admitted—all to see the tree, and all apparently as well pleased with the joy of the children as if it had been their own especial treat. And then the names of the fortunate possessors of certain lovely toys were called, and the gentle widow of the founder of the ward

handed them to their owners as they came forward to receive them. All did not come or answer to their names. A certain Tommy was called for loudly, once or twice, in vain, when a voice at last shouted out, "In bed in the Albert;" which was reason enough why poor Tommy should not receive his New Year's gift to-day, from the hands of the foundress herself. But his toy, and all the other toys and treasures apportioned to the absentees were set aside, to be given when the fitting time came. After this the outsiders and the little ones had their innings, without the ultimate neglect or overlooking of a single child.

One small woman, herself little more than a baby, lugged a huge baby in her arms, to which, because a baby, and now specially fine and fat owing to the good nursing of the ward, more than one distributor had given something; but the miniature nurse had been left out, when the dear young wife and mother of whom I have spoken before—how I should like to give her name!—spied out the truth, and asked the Moloch-bearer if she herself had had anything? "No, ma'am," said the child, with a beaming face; "I have baby." "Well, then, because you are such a good little nurse you shall have this," said the lady, giving her a divine doll, with real hair, and a glorified robe of muslin and ribbon.

I would not have exchanged that child's intense happiness at that moment for the coronation day of a queen.

The physicians, being only men, got into great coils at times, and were overwhelmed with their responsibilities. I saw one going about helplessly with another divine doll, which he did not know what to do with—it was too responsible a thing to decide, unassisted, who should have it; so at last he gave it to one of the Sisters, and cleared his conscience. Another had a lovely horse and cart in tin, which he was going to bestow on a girl baby, until quietly reminded that it was fitter for a boy who could run alone and drag the cart after him. These were the frailties of man's nature, and occasions on which the superior intelligence of woman triumphed.

The children were wonderfully well behaved. The word is no exaggeration. It would have been impossible to find better manners in any West-end drawing-room. There was no snatching, no asking, no crying. When one tiny philosopher of three saw her baby sister with a silver cracker, which it was frantically desirous of stuffing into its mouth on the instant, all she said,

with a little sigh of hopeless yearning, such a glory being surely too impossible for realisation, "How I wish I had one like that!" When they upset their boxes of sugar-plums—which they all did by trying unscientific experiments with the lids and original modes of conveyance, bottom uppermost—there was no outcry, only a general scramble of little pudgy hands, to pick up, and gather in, the wreck. I will not answer for the strictest honour of the wreckers. I think I saw more than one transfer of sugary jetsam and flotsam from the floor to unlawful mouths; but there was no complaint, and wreckers are notoriously given to this kind of illegal transfer.

After the toys had been distributed, the tree was drawn away, the lights put out, and the magic lantern set agoing. The story of Cinderella, and the adventures of a light-minded cat; an energetic cobbler who moved his arms and twitched his thread; a jerking Blondin wheeling a barrow along his tight rope with heroic courage if with an uneasy motion, and whisking face about in the twinkling of an eye and with the snap of a tin accompaniment behind the screen—with many other beautiful and æsthetic pictures, all explained and managed by the medical assistant in charge of the ward—brought forth bursts of childish applause; but in a noticeably feeble volume of sound than if the audience had been anything but a hospital audience. This was perhaps the most touching fact of the whole day—the subdued and plaintive tone of sickness running through the joy and excitement of the little company. How glad one felt for that joy given to them in the midst of so much suffering! They were all as well cared for during the time of the magic lantern, as they had been in that of the Christmas tree; and I saw the young medical assistants hoist up such of the little people as had strayed behind backs, and seat them on their shoulders to give them a good view. This too was an incident not without value, if taken as a symbol; and with this, as eminently significant and suggestive, I will end my meagre account of the New Year's-day festivities in the Pantia Ralli ward of King's College Hospital.

One word as to the origin of that ward. It had long been a matter of regret to Dr. Priestley, as a physician connected with King's College Hospital, that they had no ward specially devoted to children. So many cases were brought to the hospital, which they were obliged to send away to die because they had no place for them,

that the need of a children's ward, and the immense benefit that would result from it, became daily more pressing in his mind, and an idea which he earnestly longed to see realised. One night he was sitting with Mr. Ralli, a liberal and wealthy Greek merchant, whose name is well known to most of us; and while waiting for the moment when his attendance should be required up-stairs—for Mrs. Ralli was ill—in the course of a discussion on workhouse infirmaries, he mentioned his desire for this children's ward, and the great need there was for one at King's College Hospital; and he spoke as he felt, earnestly and warmly, but without a thought of his friend's power or possibilities. The next morning Mr. Ralli sent him a cheque for five thousand pounds, desiring him to found therewith the ward he desired, to be called the Pantia Ralli ward in memory of, and as a memorial to, his father whom he had much loved, and, in part, as a thank-offering for the safe passage of his wife through a time of danger. The money was to be invested in such securities as he approved of, and Dr. Priestley was to be one of the trustees; there were to be twelve beds in the ward, and he reserved to himself the right of sending children there when he liked. Finding on calculation that there was not enough for the twelve beds proposed, Mr. Ralli added another thousand pounds to make up the sum needed. This then was the origin of this pretty and delightful ward—a chance conversation between an earnest-minded man, deeply touched by the sorrows he was unable to relieve, and his generous friend, whose heart caught the divine spark that warmed the other, and who practically fulfilled what that other had mentally originated. Alas! there was to-day only the sweet and sorrowful widow to see the good work of her husband: he having "entered into his rest" meanwhile; and the memorial he had designed for his father having become now his own.

He could have raised none of greater value. In old times medical students cared nothing for children's diseases, and knew nothing of them; now they are educated to understand the special nature of these diseases, and taught to give them the attention and thought they demand. And as we have learned to think that beginning at the beginning is a better system than tinkering midway, the prevention of disease in childhood is now accepted as a wiser thing than leaving the little ones to perish

miserably, or to live yet more miserably for the propagation of infirmity and distress. But there are not enough funds even yet for the perfect working of this part of the hospital; and if there were more, the Nightingale ward, which is at present closed, would be opened for the admission of children. Perhaps it will come: who knows? Great deeds invariably have their imitators; and Mr. Ralli's great deed may not be always left without its double. When it comes, there will be many a glad home round about King's College Hospital, many a helpless little sufferer will be eased of its pain, many a valuable life will be saved, and many a mother's full heart will pray for a blessing on those who have kept her hearth from desolation, and left her a life still worth the living.

I must say one word on the Fourth Ward, as it is called, close to the Ralli, because it is so pretty. It is painted a cool refreshing grey, of itself a beauty for the weary eyes of patients, to whom the ugly yellow so long in vogue must be intolerably painful in certain disorders. The walls were all festooned with wreaths of holly leaves—the leaves strung on threads, and interspersed with coloured paper flowers. They had been made by the head nurse and a few of the patients, quite unknown to the rest, and hid away until the right moment came; and then, one morning, the ward broke out into sudden greenery, and the admiration and delight of the whole hospital recompensed the workers.

In leaving the hospital, I passed through the ward immediately below the "Ralli" where all this merriment had been, and I came upon a very different scene. Screened off from the rest near the fire, lay a dying woman. It was the last hour on her dial, and her moments might almost be counted. Her husband was sitting by her, silently waiting for death to come and part them for ever. He had leave to stay there through the night—the last the poor creature would live to see. She looked like a corpse at this moment, lying as she was, absolutely still, with the bedclothes folded smoothly under her chin, her body quite motionless, her very breathing scarcely perceptible, and only her sad eyes wandering about the small space. The world had evidently gone very far away from her, and only God, and love, and death were left her. It was a striking contrast—this "above and below;" but it was an epitome of human history. She was dying as the consequence of a very simple accident originally; she had run a

needle into her knee, and this was the result.

This, then, was New Year's Day in hospital as I witnessed it, and as I wish that many others had witnessed it. I left with a very full heart, feeling deeply the exquisite beauty of tenderness, and charity, with which the whole establishment seems penetrated. How I wished with my poor foreigner, that I had the "means" whereby the good works of the institution could be kept up and helped forward. For work like this is essentially dependent on means, and when these fail, the work, however much it may be needed, stops and fails too.

AS THE CROW FLIES.

DUE WEST. BRIDGEWATER TO TAUNTON.

FAST from the Mendips, that sink now to faint blue waves in the horizon, the crow cleaves the silent air, and folds its wings upon the glittering weathercock of St. Mary's spire at Bridgewater. Yonder spread stubble fields and orchards, over what was once the vast swamp where Alfred hid himself from the Danes. Two miles away to the south-east lies fatal Sedgemoor, where the Duke of Monmouth was defeated, and many a trenched field still named after traditions of those unhappy days.

The duke landed at Lyme in June, 1685. Devonshire, Dorsetshire, and Somersetshire, were soon in a flame. The day after he was proclaimed king, Monmouth entered Bridgewater, and was welcomed by the mayor and aldermen, who led him in procession to the High Cross. He took up his residence at the castle, and in the Castle Field his six thousand followers were encamped. The men had few pikes and muskets, and many of them carried scythes. His cavalry were mounted on rough hairy colts, just taken from the marshes, and almost untamed.

After many purposeless marches and counter-marches, Faversham came down upon him with two thousand five hundred regulars, and fifteen hundred Wiltshire militia—strong, stubborn shepherds from the Plain, and tough farmers from the borders of Dorsetshire, and they encamped at Middlezoy, and on the moor beyond Chedzoy. Poor irresolute Monmouth, who had only recently abandoned the notion of flight, resolved on a night attack. His Puritan preachers harangued the troops. Ferguson, a fanatic rascal, who was his chief's adviser, took for his text the ominous words:

"The Lord God of Gods, the Lord God of Gods, he knoweth, and Israel he shall know. If it be in rebellion, or in transgression, against the Lord, save us not this day."

The moon was full, and the northern streamers were dancing; but a thick white marsh fog was creeping up from the banks of the Parrett. Monmouth and his forty bodyguards rode out of the castle as the clock

struck eleven. He looked desponding, so people thought. His army marched up what is now called the War-lane, towards the dykes of Sedgemoor, where Faversham's men were revelling. Monmouth led the foot; Grey, the horse. No drum was to be sounded, no shot fired. The word for the night was "Soho." About one in the morning the rebels were on the boggy moor. Three broad ditches filled with water lay between them and the enemy. Their ammunition waggons remained behind. The pike and scythemen passed the Black Ditch by a muddy causeway. The second causeway, that over Longmoor Rhine, the guide missed in the fog, and the third, over Bussex Rhine, he had forgotten. The new recruits, rough ploughmen and fishermen, became confused. Some of King James's Horse Guards seeing them advancing, fired their carbines, and rode back to rouse the troopers at Weston Zoyland. Dumbarton's regiments beat to arms. Monmouth moving forward fast, suddenly found himself stopped by the yawning darkness of Bussex Rhine.

"For whom are you?" cried a hoarse voice across the trench.

"For the king."

"What king?"

"King Monmouth," and then the rebels shouted their war cry, "God with us!"

The reply was a blazing volley, that sent the wild marsh horses to the rightabout; they never rallied again. Just then the rebel infantry came running up, and fired across the dark trench, steadily, but too high. The Life Guards and Blues scattered the fugitive cavalry, and the waggons fled wildly with the powder waggons. Monmouth was left, without cavalry or ammunition, shut in between the trenches of Sedgemoor. The duke showed good blood: he snatched a pike, rallied his men, and led them, as day broke, over the causeway. But Faversham was now on the field, and Captain Churchill was massing the royal infantry. Then Monmouth fled.

The rebels held out, though hemmed in by the Life Guards and the Blues. Accustomed to wield flails and mining tools, Monmouth's men were stubborn with their scythes and musket butts. They beat back Oglethorpe, and struck down Sarsfield. Their incessant cry was, "Ammunition, for God's sake, ammunition!" Just then the king's guns dashed up from the Bridgewater-road, the Bishop of Winchester having lent his coach horses and traces for the purpose. There was a want of gunners; but the king's officers helped to load, point, and fire, and sent the shot tearing through the ranks of rebel pikes. They wavered, they retired, they broke. Then, straight through the hot smoke, the Blues swept down with savage swords, and Faversham's infantry came streaming across the ditch. The Mendip miners held out bravely for a minute or two, but they were soon felled or ridden down. Then the rout was total, and the moor was covered with shouting and screaming men. Three hundred of the king's soldiers lay dead beside Bussex Rhine, and a thousand rebels strewed the moor.

Faversham ordered many of the prisoners to instant execution. Among these was a young Somersetshire lad famous for his swift running. Faversham, with a brutal laugh, made him a promise of life, if he would outrun one of the wild marsh horses. A halter was tied to his neck and attached at the other end to the horse, on which a soldier sat to urge the animal to the fullest speed. The prisoner, maddened by the hope of life, leaped away and actually kept up with the horse for three quarters of a mile, from Bussex Rhine to Brentsfeld Bridge. The cruel general, rather enraged than pleased at the performance of the tremendous feat, instantly ordered the young rebel to the gallows. Another prisoner was more fortunate. He had to leap for his life—so far in three leaps. He leaped madly, and at the third bound dashed headlong into an adjoining wood, and escaped pursuit. His name was Swayne, and three stones on the Shapwick estate are still pointed out as Swayne's Jumps. The next day there was a line of twenty gibbets on the road leading from Weston Zoyland to Bridgewater, and on every gibbet swung a rebel. A day or two afterwards, a gaunt, greybearded man, in a shepherd's dress, was seized in a field of peace on the borders of Hampshire. It was Monmouth. A few months later Jefferies opened the Bloody Assize in Somersetshire, and in a few days hung, drew, and quartered two hundred and thirty-three prisoners. Every village green, church porch, and marketplace was rendered loathsome by heads stuck on poles, or corpses hung in irons. Monmouth perished on Tower-hill, and Faversham was made Knight of the Garter and Captain of the First Life Guards.

In an Elizabethan house in Mill-street, Bridgewater, the great Admiral Blake was born. His father was a merchant, his mother the co-heiress of a knightly family. A blunt, bold, honest man, he distinguished himself during the civil wars at the head of his troop of horse, surprising Taunton and defending it desperately during two sieges. His services to the Parliament were of the most splendid kind; he destroyed the Royalist fleet, took the Channel Islands, and beat the Dutch from the narrow seas. He bullied the Dey of Tunis, and with incredible daring sailed into the bay of Teneriffe and burnt some Spanish galleons which he could not carry off. He died on his return home, just as he was entering Plymouth Sound. Blake did not commence his naval career till he was fifty years of age, yet he became one of our greatest admirals. Clarendon says he was the first who disdained to keep his ship and men out of danger, and to teach sailors to despise land forts, which he proved to be more noisy than dangerous. When people expressed their scruples of serving Cromwell, Blake said nobly, "It is not our business to mind state affairs, but to prevent foreigners fooling us." His most desperate action was off the Goodwin Sands, when he bore down on Van Tromp's eighty vessels with only forty men-of-war, but was beaten off,

losing six ships. Van Tromp then sailed through the Channel proudly, with a broom at his masthead to show that he had swept the English from the seas. Blake, however, was no man to bear this; three months after he swooped at a Dutch convoy of merchantmen of eighty vessels, and captured eleven men-of-war and thirty merchantmen—a glorious prize. Blake was as honest as he was brave, and after all the galleons and plate vessels he had taken did not leave five hundred pounds behind him. The Royalists cast Blake's bones out of Westminster Abbey, but they could not erase his name from our history.

Straight as a black-plumed arrow the crow bears on from Bridgewater to the Isle of Athelney, once a swampy forest, where King Alfred sheltered himself for a year in a neatherd's cottage from the Danes. From these river-side marshes he made those forays on the Danes that culminated in his great Wiltshire victory. While at Athelney, tradition has it that he lost a favourite jewel of gold and enamel, which had been fastened to a necklace. Dropped in the underwood, trodden into the river sand, fallen among the rushes or the ferns, the ornament remained for centuries in the Athelney earth, unclaimed, unseen, till, extraordinary to relate, it was turned up by chance in the seventeenth century. It is now in the Ashmolean Museum, and is one of our most precious relics. Oval in shape, and of Byzantine workmanship, it bears the inscription, "Alfred had me made."

The crow pauses over Halswell House to recall an old tradition about the Tyntes—an old crusading tradition it is, for the family has been planted here on the Milverton road longer than the oaks of their domain. The first Tynte, a young knight of the Arundel family, fought bravely at Ascalon, riding down the Saracens till the white housings of his horse were bordered crimson deep with Infidel blood. Richard Cœur de Lion, who had observed him hewing among the Moslem sabres, declared that the maiden knight had borne himself like a lion, and had done work enough for six crusaders, whereupon he conferred on him for arms, a lion argent on a field gules, between six crosslets of the first, and for motto, "Tyntetus cruore Saraceno."

The crow flies faster as it approaches Taunton, till its broad wings flap rejoicingly over the pleasant town above the river Tone. The landscape is purely English; the vale, studded with orchards, is green with pastures, cottages, manor-houses, and village spires are scattered over it "in gay abundance" to the very foot of the blue Quantock and Blackdown hills, that rise like huge waves in the far horizon. Taunton used to be famous for its cloth manufacture, and the vale was so fertile with "the zun and zoil" alone, that there was a quaint Somersetshire saying mentioned by Fuller: "Ch' was born at Taunton Dean; where should I be born else?"

The crow has only to alight on St. Mary's rich-carved tower to gather up as many

legends as there are grains of wheat in a corn-field. Early in the civil wars the town was besieged by Sir Richard Granville and eight thousand licentious and rapacious Cavaliers, while Cromwell was busy at Windsor preparing for the blow shortly to be struck at Naseby. Taunton, tormented with ceaseless fire, though half taken and half burned, still held out under Blake. Many an anxious reconnoitre must Blake have made in those days from St. Mary's or St. James's towers to see where the enemy swarmed thicker round the earthworks, where the cannon blazed most, or where the hot sally of the townsmen was being most strenuously pushed forward towards the Royalist tents. Colonel Weldon was at last sent by Fairfax with four thousand men, and Granville, dreading the approach of the main Puritan body, raised the siege. From St. Mary's towers Blake must have seen, with calm delight, the enemy's masses of foot slowly loosen and scatter over the valley. But the fever had only slackened for an interval. Granville, reinforced by three thousand horse, under the dashing Goring, soon again advanced to Taunton, and shut up Weldon and his men in the half ruined town. After the heavy blow at Naseby, Fairfax, however, drove Goring's Cavaliers from Taunton, beat them at Lamport, and took Bridgewater, with a king's garrison of two thousand six hundred men.

In this second siege, when the Cavaliers were again raging round the town, Blake behaved like a Roman of the old rock. The streets round the Priory and King Ina's Castle were soon mere hulks of shattered walls and half destroyed roofs. Ten thousand Cavaliers raged outside the ramparts, shouting for the blood of these resolute and dangerous Puritans. Shot and powder grew rapidly scarce, and the fire from the town perceptibly slackened, except at those volcanic moments when Goring tried to storm. Food, too, grew scarce. No droves of oxen now from the valley, no fat sheep from Mendip Downs. The soldiers became pale and hollow-eyed, the women silent and hopeless, the children querulous and fretful. Blake had already announced his intention of putting the garrison on rations of horse-flesh. There was only one hog left in the town, and this animal was too useful to be eaten. Poor wretch! led round the walls daily, it was whipped at intervals, to induce the Cavaliers to think that fresh supplies had been secretly thrown in.

The people's spirit never failed. As for Blake, he swore he would eat his boots before he surrendered, though the enemy had shown their fierce faces already at a practicable breach, and had even planted cannon in part of the suburbs. At last the storm began to clear; one May day the enemy's fire relaxed. There were shouts and counter shouts; the king's banners receded; the tents were lifted. Fairfax came dashing in. The town was relieved; the siege was over. That eleventh of May remained a festival for a century after that. After the Restoration, when every turncoat was drinking the king's

health on his knees, the Taunton men kept this holiday with stubborn faith and truth. The court, vexed at this, and roused by Tory remonstrances from Somersetshire, filled up the Taunton moat, and demolished the wall that had held out so gallantly, backed by the brave Somersetshire hearts behind it. The puritanical fervour was kept up in Taunton by the preaching and exhortation of that celebrated Dissenter, Joseph Alleine, author of the still well-known tract "The Alarm to the Unconverted." He was thrown into prison by the Cavaliers, and died worn out by toil and persecution; but his precepts were not forgotten.

No wonder, then, that when Monmouth arrived he was eagerly welcomed as a deliverer from the Papists. Every door and window in Taunton was adorned with flowers. The men wore green boughs in their hats. A procession of girls presented Monmouth with an embroidered flag woven with royal emblems. It was here evil advisers urged the son of Lucy Walters to allow himself to be proclaimed king in the market-place; King Monmouth—within twenty-four hours he had set a price on the head of his hook-nosed uncle, and forbidden people to pay the usurper's taxes. As the doomed army marched on the twenty-first of June from Taunton, Ferguson, the duke's worst adviser, spy and a conspirator, waved his sword and cried out to the Taunton townspeople in the craziness of vanity—

"Look at me—you have heard of me. I am Ferguson, the famous Ferguson, the Ferguson for whose head many hundred pounds have been offered."

And this was the duke's prime minister—fitting minister for such a pretender!

After Sedgemoor, the dreadful vengeance of James fell fiercely on Taunton. Faversham left at Bridgewater, Colonel Percy Kirke, a cruel licentious soldier, who had served against the Moors at Tangier, and acquired there all the African's sensuality and hardheartedness. He had persecuted the Jews, flogged, and even murdered, his soldiers, and extorted bribes; his regiment, the most savage and dissolute in the service, was known ironically as Kirke's Lambs. They bore on their flag a Paschal Lamb as a sign they had fought against the Infidel. Taunton trembled when this monster entered the town, followed by two carts full of wounded and groaning rebels, and by a drove of pale prisoners chained two and two. That same night many of Monmouth's men were hung without a trial from the sign-post of the White Hart. No shrive, no leave-taking. They were strangled like dogs by the mocking and brutal soldiers. The officers of Kirke's regiment caroused at the windows while the executions went on, and drunk a health every time a rebel was thrown from the ladder. When the poor wretches' legs quivered, Colonel Kirke ordered the drums to strike up. "We'll give the rebels," he said, "music for their dancing."

One poor fellow they hung and cut down twice. Each time he was asked if he repented

of his treason, and on his saying no, that if the thing was to do again, he would do it, they hove him up. The third time they let him die, and so ended his agony. The butcher who quartered the bodies that were to be sent to the villages all round Sedgemoor stood ankle-deep in blood. One degraded fellow suspected of leaning to Monmouth, they compelled to assist in steeping the rebels' limbs in pitch. Macaulay in his powerful way says: "He afterwards returned to his plough, but a mark like that of Cain was upon him. He was known through his village by the horrible name of Tom Boilman. The rustics long continued to relate that though he had by his sinful and shameful deed saved himself from the vengeance of the Lambs, he had not escaped the vengeance of a higher power. In a great storm he flew for shelter under an oak, and was there struck dead by lightning." It is said that Kirke put one hundred prisoners to death, the week which followed the battle. The savage was at last recalled by James, chiefly because he had sold safe conducts to rich fugitives, who were willing to embark for New England.

But Taunton had no reason to rejoice when the sound of Kirke's drums died away down the valley, for the Bloody Assize was about to commence, and Jefferies had just accepted the Great Seal. King James, in parting, had presented him with a blood-stone ring, earnest of future favours. In Hampshire he had condemned an amiable lady to be burned alive for merely sheltering two fugitives. It was reported that at Dorchester, when the clergyman preached mercy in an assize sermon, Jefferies had grimly grinned. In a few days after he hung seventy-four persons. He advanced by degrees to the full harvest of death. All the time the judicial butchery was going on, he swore, blustered, laughed, and joked like a drunken man. He roared that he could smell a Presbyterian forty miles off. "That impudent rebel," he shouted to a contumacious prisoner, "to reflect on the king's evidence! I see thee, villain—I see thee already with the halter round thy neck." One poor trembling wretch said he was on the parish. "Then I'll ease the parish of the burden," Jefferies said, "hang him!" He even boasted that he had hung more traitors than all the judges since the Conquest. Many of the rebels died very bravely. Abraham Holmes, an old Cromwellian, having had his arm shattered at Sedgemoor, amputated it himself, and apologised for going awkwardly up the ladder. A lad of family named Hewling died with such calm fortitude, that his conduct touched even the soldiers.

When Jefferies entered Taunton, the pen where the sheep to be slaughtered lay thickest, he declared openly in his charge that it would not be his fault if he did not depopulate the place. The poor girls who had presented the standard to Monmouth were all thrown into prison, though some of the poor little things were children under ten years of age. They had only carried the flag at the request of their

schoolmistress. The sword fell on them ruthlessly, one sickened in prison, where fever prevailed, and died there. Another poor girl, pleading for mercy to Jefferies, was handed over by him to the jailer, and died of despair in a few hours. The Tory member for Bridgewater undertook to exact seven thousand pounds as the ransom of these children. That sum was to be the booty of the maids of honour, for even James's queen was at this time sharing in the confiscations and the sale of slaves to the plantations. The ransoms thus obtained at this time were very large—one gentleman paid Jefferies fifteen thousand pounds. Roger Hoare, a merchant of Bridgewater, disbursed one thousand pounds. Hundreds of poor Somersetshire men were sent as slaves for ten years to the West Indies. The voyage out was terrible indeed. Wounded rebels, never visited by surgeons since Sedgemoor, were thrown in heaps into the holds of small cranky vessels. The sharks soon had half of them. They could neither stand up nor sleep. Rotten biscuit and foul water were given them scantily and at long intervals. They were not suffered to go on deck for weeks together, and armed men guarded the hatchway. Every hold was a seething mass of groaning misery. Death alone showed mercy to those unhappy men. In one vessel alone, twenty-two convicts out of ninety-nine died before the vessel reached Jamaica, though after an unusually quick journey.

After the assizes, as Fox says, all the west became an Aceldama, nothing was to be seen in it but forsaken walls, dismal gibbets, and ghastly carcases. At last Jefferies proposed "to jog homewards" after his campaign, having transported three hundred and eighty-five persons and hung ninety-seven. Then came the cruel confiscations and greedy divisions of the property of those dead men whose heads scowled over the church porches, or whose bodies hung beside the park gates. The Bloody Assize will never be forgotten in Taunton.

FATAL ZERO.

A DIARY KEPT AT HOMBURG: A SHORT SERIAL STORY.

CHAPTER XIV.

WEDNESDAY.—Arose after one of those weary nights with heart very sore, having awakened in great trouble. A sense as if a great blow had fallen on me: and a short way off, on the table, I could see the fatal silver pile. Yet I looked at it, not with disgust, but with a strange interest, much as a woman does on a faithless admirer whom she still loves. There they were piled up in that almost picturesque disorder into which piles of money fall, and then came the unworthy consolation, of which I feel ashamed, and yet which has force, namely, "that it turned out well on the

whole," and there was no harm done. And yet had there been loss there should not have been a bit of difference. . . . Yes, it shall go to the poor—the Lutheran and the Catholic poor, in equal shares, and I must add a couple of pieces to make it round, and as a little penalty. Somehow these early grey hours of the morning do make one feel so wretched. It is the only drawback of early rising. Have something on your mind, rise betimes, and walk a little through a lonely town, and you will see your trouble laid in the blackest colours. After breakfast, towards noon, it fades out. Rising for a journey, at, say, five, makes me utterly miserable and low spirited. Now I must train myself a little. Another man would let this prey on him: I shall put it away from me: it is no use, it is unmanly, whining over anything that cannot be recalled. Why, when we see the Bishop of —'s nieces "putting down," the Bishop himself reading the Times just outside, it cannot be the unpardonable sin exactly.

See how a little fall of this sort brings its own inconveniences. The dean, who has not noticed me for a long time, stopped me in the walk.

"Fie! fie!" he said. "Is this the end of the good thoughts and pious sentiments? Ah! Did I not warn you, my friend?"

Now, my dear Dora and darling, you see I set all this down as a little lesson. And I am not ashamed of it. I answered him without anger:

"I deserve your reproof, Mr. Dean. We are not all perfect, and you have often, I dare say, repeated in the pulpit a number of times, A just man will fall. Over such a fall, however, there is no ground for congratulation, or, as the vulgar would say, chuckling." On that I turned away.

Receive a telegram from the merchant, at Frankfort, saying he will be at his house at four, and sign the papers, if I bring them and an English witness. I am not sorry to hear this, for it was hanging over me that I might be kept here for an immense time. I should be glad to be home, my health is almost restored, and I have no doubt an easy journey, with a little lingering at some of the noble and curious towns on the road, would be more profitable than the waters. I feel a "flurry" beginning in this place. It is living in a heated ball-room; but who shall I get as a witness? I know no one. Grainger came in as I was writing. The very man. And yet I don't like quite admitting him to that confidence. It is too familiar; but as I shall

be leaving now very soon, it really makes no matter. To-morrow I shall seriously *begin* to think of fixing the day of departure—the next day still think of it—the third day *fix* it; the fourth day *unfix*, and put it off two days. Then *begin* to think again. In this way, said an old officer to me—at dinner, of course, the invariable time we form acquaintances—you discount and get value for every hour of your time. Each of these stages is a reprieve; otherwise the time slips away, and you are going before you have begun to enjoy yourself. Grainger was delighted to come. An expedition to Frankfort, he said, was the only thing that kept him up “in this hole.” Accordingly we set off. I had some misgivings about taking him; but the reflection occurred that I might be saving him from temptation, and that bringing him back to taste these more innocent joys of life, might touch some old chord. Then really, pet of mine—comic as the notion may seem to you—I appeared to myself to be acting as a sort of special missionary to this place; really as benighted as were the Fee Jee Islanders. I know I am weak enough at home, dear, and anything but missionary like; but still this will be laying up a little treasury, a small deposit account on which I may hereafter draw, and say to myself, “Well, that time at Homburg, I did, or tried to do, some little good, and succeeded.” What a strange old town. So quaint, so original, so fine, so ancient. I could have lingered on hours there, but I felt there was business before me, and I had no right to make holiday of it. We went straight to the merchant’s house, and found him in. He was evidently a *ci-devant* Jew; he could not disguise those features, and a *hard* Jew also. I produced the deeds and papers. The signing was done speedily, and the money paid down. It was to be lodged in the Frankfort Bank in my name. Nothing could be more satisfactory. My friend, Mr. Bernard, directed me so to do until he sent me instructions as to its disposal, and there I think he will own, I have worked it favourably for him to the end. He will not object either to the little benefice I have made out for him, uninstructed. I dare say he will be more pleased at that, trifling as it is, just as the barrister or doctor does not like to have the shillings kept back out of his guineas. I was greatly pleased with Grainger. Grainger seemed a little surprised at my knowledge of business and *savoir-faire*, dealing so easily with a Jew

banker, who is supposed to be up to all the tracasseries of money.

“Why,” he said as we went out, “one would think you had been brought up in Frankfort, and were accustomed to meet these chaps. I couldn’t have held my own to that cormorant as you did; but I have got cowed, I suppose.”

“My dear Grainger,” I said, “if you want to know the secret, it will come from a little self-reliance. I have something I can depend upon *here*. A man will swing himself across a precipice by a thin rope which you will be afraid of, simply because he *knows* and has tried its strength. There is the whole mystery, Grainger; and if I could only bring you to rely on your own heart, which is *true*, I know, and not be led here and there passively, the helpless victim of every idle whim and inclination—” He said nothing. I could see he was sunk in thought. In this way, by a sort of implied contrast, and not by officious ill-judged canting and preaching, which some of the “good people” would have thought the best, I know enough of the world to have discovered that we work these things out for ourselves best. We came home in great spirits.

“What will you do with all that money?” he said.

“We shall go straight and lodge it at the bank,” I answered. And we did so.

“My God!” he said, in a low voice, “if I had that money, I should be ashamed to own to you the frightful idea that would occur to me. What a humiliation!”

“You would hardly be able to pass the *kursaal* without going in,” I said gravely. “Well, there is no humiliation in being tempted—the best and bravest have been. The crime, the humiliation is in another direction. I don’t think the worse of you, Grainger, for that confession.”

Coming from the railway I meet the young husband and wife, he walking in front “brutally,” both so changed. He had an angry and determined look that was almost ferocious. She was pale and scarcely able to walk. Their luggage very small, and I daresay, shrunk away, like the rest of their means, followed them on a man’s shoulder. *There* was a splendid achievement on the side of Mephistopheles and Co. Sweet morsels for them—stripping the young and the innocent—surely the vengeance of Heaven should overtake such wretches—fire should come down from heaven, or rather by a simpler process, it is no sin to wish that a common earthly

conflagration would break out in the night and engulf their gaudy salons des jeux, their tables, rakes, devilish engines—and above all their ill-gotten pillage—their heaps of notes and stores of gold.

Of course a sharp *friend*, or the smooth dean, if he heard me, would remind me about those few bits of silver won the other night. There are people always ready with a “*tu quoque*.” I have not the slightest scruple about that now. I may say I did it to show my power. I did it of my own motion. I take it, Mr. Dean, the distinction is this, and it would do you no harm for your next sermon. One is tempted and yields—that is a fall. One does the same action, *not* from temptation or yielding, but purposely, with one’s eyes open—that is another matter, Mr. Dean. I can indeed smile at myself when in that little trouble the other night; very natural and excusable. The poor, at all events, will be able to congratulate themselves.

A letter from my darling Dora, to whom I shall write about my little despoiling of the Philistines. Of course she will look grave at first, like some of the *soi-disant* “good people;” but she could not be expected to understand the matter. *She* is good indeed; nor will I use the vulgar comparison, significant of a covetous mind, “as good as gold.” My sweet Dora! I have half a mind to buy her a trinket out of a few florins of “the winnings,” and not tell her at first until it is round her pretty neck. No. I suppose I had better let the poor have every florin that I promised to them.

How prettily she turns her letters. There’s where a woman’s strength is, if they knew it—nature, simplicity. A little bunch of violets tumbles out. It has travelled all the way from Datchley. “I send it to you,” she says, “to show you that my cough and cold are quite gone, for I gathered them myself.” Sir Richard Steele could not have put it more prettily.

There is also an official letter, with the seal of our bank, which I know very well. When you are at a long distance from home, in the midst of a little carnival, home news are received for the first moment with joy—then with mistrust. You know what is coming. It is like the moment before the ball leaps into its cell. (How these odious associations cling to me!) It is from Maxwell, the manager—I know his cruel cold hand. He writes as stiffly as if he did not know me. He tells “Dear Sir” that he is instructed by the Board to require my return,

at furthest, within a week from the receipt of this note, as they understand I am now perfectly restored to health. He was directed to say the Board were a little surprised at my not showing more alacrity in corresponding to the very great indulgence with which I had been treated—an indulgence which was intended for an urgent case of sickness, and not to promote amusement. They must peremptorily insist on my return by the day named.

Upon my word this is quite a new tone! And what have I done to merit such language—the language almost of a Russian to his serf—language which none of them, if I were in my old situation of a *gentleman*, none of them *dare* to address to me? In these offices they are always glad to be “down” on the gentleman. But there is something behind this. . . . To be sure. Did not the dean say he had a nephew or cousin in the bank whom he hoped I would be kind to? Ah, *this gentleman* wants my place, and the dean has written to him about me. I have a good mind to throw up the whole thing, write them back a resignation, and have done with them and their bank. What right have they to assume I am staying here for pleasure? And the fallacy of it, into which their dull minds have fallen! They do not see that this very amusement was the cure prescribed, and which I came officially to seek. I have a good mind to let them have their beggarly place. One hundred and thirty pounds a year! Why, only yesterday, *I saw four times that sum earned in one minute!* and it will take me just four long weary years of life to earn that beggarly sum. That villain Maxwell—this is *his* work. He has plotted this; he has never forgiven my foiling him that time, and getting away in spite of him. And now I have to return to submit to his tyranny and slavery. It was that, I solemnly believe, that helped to make me ill before. Well, this is all folly; I must submit and suffer. After all, how much have I to be thankful for! . . . I shall start to-morrow evening; pack up in the morning. It will be a relief to get away, for I am getting nervous and excited in presence of these temptations. And yet I feel not a little pride, for I have steered my little bark successfully, on the whole, and have defied Satan and his works. As for those few pieces of silver, I can smile at that now. I shall enjoy myself to-night.

I go in among them once more this evening, and own to my pet, that so far

from any scruples detaining me, I entered with something of the severe, stern, purpose with which a policeman enters a low den of thieves and looks round searchingly to see that no villany is hatching. He is not contaminated by that association, for he is doing his duty. So do I feel among them, but not of them—with those croupiers, the Fagins, Sikeses, and Dodgers of the place, pursuing genteelly what is no better than "cracking a crib." I would give the Fagins and others, one half less penal servitude than these rascals. . . . Certainly it is the most curious spectacle, far above any human interest. And such wretched, little, mean, low glimpses. The woman who pillages a wretched florin and goes through a perfect row, is insulted by the croupiers, is hustled by the servants—all to get a miserable one-and-eight-pence! A gold piece drops on the ground; the owner will not hear of any one stooping to look for it, and sternly keeps the space clear about it till the servant comes with a light. *That fellow, too, would never succeed in finding it; it would travel up his sleeve, unless there was an honourable understanding of a deduction for his service of at least ten per cent.* These familiars thrive and fatten on the gamblers; spoils pour in on them, in every conceivable way. One encumbers the successful gambler with obtrusive help about his hat—a florin; another has a bag of old gloves, which he pins down round the table, when the play begins. These dirty symbols keep places—a service to be remunerated with florins. I look at the man on the high stool behind, who is the detective, and whose duty it is to watch and measure and pay, and, above all, *support* his understrappers with the air of a sort of disinterested bystander, who *must* interfere, at the last moment, with his impartial testimony. This is rather too good. What a set!—so harmonious and consistent in all their associations! "Gang" is the ruder but more appropriate word. Not one of them, I can see, likes me; they look at me with distrust; they know what I think of them, how I could expose them, and *strip them of some of their gains*, if I chose. The "black" man, as I call him, who is something between a "betting man" and an upper turnkey, overheard me directing the young girl how to win, and the look of distrust and dislike he gave me was indescribable. He would like to have called up two of his bullies in the gold lace, to have hustled me out—if he dared. . . . At this mo-

ment they were beside me, and he is staring impudently into their faces—that gross stare which only a Frenchman can give.

"Oh, Mr. Austen! You will help me, as you did the other night!"

I looked a little grave. "That was under protest," I said; "and for one night only, as they say of the actors."

"But it is not that; it is not for the money; it is for your miraculous system. It is like magic."

"Give me your money," I said, "and we will see. But you will understand—I merely do this as an experiment, to oblige a young lady."

The usual luck followed. I waited till the colour had turned up four times in succession, and then laid on the opposite. We won—only a few francs—but quite sufficient for her. I cannot say how elated I was at this control of mere chance.

Ten o'clock.—O shame, humiliation! that I should have been such a dupe and fool! I could beat, lash myself. But I must write—write, if only to justify myself. That man did it on purpose, I know he did; and that I should have trusted him! . . . After they had gone, I somehow felt myself in great spirits—a sort of elation and a sense of happiness I have not known for a long time. Grainger comes up. I think he had been drinking a little.

"Every one," he says, "is talking of your great luck. There is no system going like yours."

"It is only the system of good sense, Grainger," I say, in my banal stupidity.

"Then why not help me," he went on, "as you helped that young girl?"

"Because," I said; "that is a different matter. You are bound to me not to play."

"Well, leave me out of the business; but I think you are bound to do something for yourself and your family. A man that wants a hundred pounds, and could turn it by an hour's work, is sacrificing a little too much to his principles; it's selfish, my friend."

He said no more, but—shall I own it?—those vile words began to ring in my ear like a chime—"selfish! selfish!"—so it seemed. A dazzling prospect seemed to rush in on me. All our little debts, overdue—baker and butcher, the clothes for the children, for which my poor pet had to go, with humiliation, to that coarse Wilcox, "to beg for a little time." Selfish! It was so—to expose my darling to that! I might come home, not rich—no, I did not want a hundred pounds, or two hun-

dred, but even forty, thirty, twenty. What a surprise, what an aid that would be! And it would be some enjoyment to diminish the huge gains coming to *them*, even by what I should be able to take from them. I know not what came over me at that moment. The walls of restraint seemed to topple down, as at the sound of a trumpet. For a second the whole seemed harmless and allowable. I saw cheerful faces round, smiles of enjoyment, for every one seemed to be winning, stooping down eagerly and picking up money with laughter and a sort of exultation. I could not resist, and, stretching over a sitting player, who was very impatient, I laid down my five-franc piece as the ball began to spin. I had no nervousness, but even a sort of assured confidence. I had chosen the most judicious moment conceivable; red had "gone" already six times, and I had even nearly lost a chance. I was thinking how curious it would be if I was to trace further wealth to that solitary little piece, when the click came, the ball was at home, and then the pause—"ROUGE PAIR ET PASSE!" In went my silver piece, swept in venomously. It was like a blow; it chilled my heart, and seemed like an omen. Worse, I saw D'Eyncourt opposite with the two young girls, smiling and pointing. With the usual instinct, my hand flew nervously to my pocket, as if fearful of being late—my fingers were trembling and convulsively grasped *three* heavy pieces. That would bring all back with a handsome benefice. D'Eyncourt was watching and smiling, and I saw him take the young girl's money from her, and put it down on the contrary division to mine.

Red again! Another numbing shock! What I felt was, not repentance or disappointment, but anger, something like rage even, and a determination not to be beaten. I am amazed at myself, when I think that my next step was to lay down two napoleons with faltering touch. It seemed to me I could not lay them down fast enough. Round went the ball with its monotonous burr; then the click, and that croupier, with a satanic sneer, announces red again!

Dare I own to myself, think for a moment, what I have done? It seems to make my brain quiver. Oh! oh! what a fall! Ten bright golden pieces! That would pay and pay again all her little bills. Oh, wretch! Selfish! selfish! What *am* I to do? Go

back at once—to-morrow—to-night! Get away from this hellish place—walk—travel third class—submit to every privation, and thus get some of it back. *Get some of it back!* Oh, how my pulse flutters! Yes, what I *did* before! Why not now? The luck may be for me. Yes, there is time still, now. I must not be childish or ridiculous. What if I venture, I say, two gold louis, and solemnly vow and swear before Heaven, on my bended knees, not to go beyond that? There is little or no difference between ten and twelve. One man, last week, on two florins, won his thirty napoleons. I saw him. . . . Now I just say to myself, very calmly, "Let me look into this matter quietly. I am not a fool—an impulsive, ridiculous soul. *What is ten pounds after all?* To be racked by remorse, my equilibrium upset, all for ten pounds!"

"Consider, sir," said Johnson, "what a trifle this will appear to you in a year!"

After all, I am not *quite* a child, to be brought to account for spending its pocket money—and I that have scraped, and coined my poor brain and wits, into *many* a ten pounds, for my family—it is hard that I should be brought to book for what a hundred men in my case would do, and say nothing about. It was foolish and impulsive; but, God knows, if we are to be brought to book for every trifle, life would be simply wretched. . . . What I *do* blame myself for, is my not keeping my judgment steadily in hand. These interruptions, and the sneering looks of that man, made me forget the unerring law I had discovered. . . . It is amazing the mysterious power of *Zero*. . . . I saw it all through to-night, though I stupidly would not recognise it. At times, it struck me, there was a fitfulness when the laws I have discovered were suspended. Then a flash of instinct or genius must take its place. But for these distractions I could have coined money to-night. But I do not want that. I shall only just get back my own.

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